

SUBJECT: Expenditures by the Director of the Department of Corrections for burial expenses of inmates in the penitentiary.

COMMITTEE: Security and Sanctions: favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 16 ayes--J. Edwards, Rudd, Blanton, Benedict, Matt Garcia, Hernandez, Lyon, Washington

0 nays

0 present, not voting

3 absent--Maloney, Nowlin, Rangel

WITNESSES: NONE

DIGEST: This bill would authorize the Director of the Department of Corrections to spend money to defray transportation costs and other burial costs of an inmate who dies in prison. The amount spent may not exceed the amount given to an inmate who is released from prison.

PRO: In some cases, a family cannot afford to transport and bury the body of a relative who dies while serving a prison sentence. Everyone should have the opportunity for a decent burial which relatives can attend.

CON: No apparent opposition

COMMENTARY: This bill amends VACS art. 6166z1, which now allows the Director of the Department of Corrections to furnish a convict who is released from prison with a sum of \$200.

Under current policy, TDC does not provide money for burial expenses. After an inmate dies, the department gives the family 72 hours in which to claim the body. If no claim is made within this time period, TDC offers the body to the Anatomical Board. If the board does not want the body, it is buried in a prison cemetery.

The Texas Department of Corrections supports the bill. TDC says it is a "humanitarian" measure that would be "beneficial to a great number of families."

COMMENTARY
(continued)

According to TDC, an average of 33 inmates die in prison each year. At a maximum of \$200 per person, \$6600 would have covered an average year's total expenses. However, the bill says only that money may be spent if necessary. The LBB's Fiscal Note estimates the cost of the bill to be \$6000 a year.